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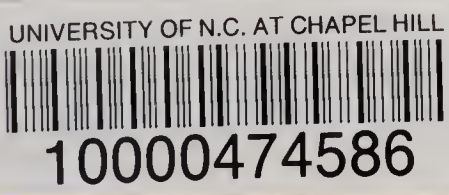

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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN ARCH,

A CHEROKEE YOUNG MAN.

COMPILED FROM COMMUNICATIONS OF MISSIONARIES

IN THE

CHEROKEE NATION.

REVISED BY THE PUBLISHING COMMITTEE.

FOURTH EDITION.

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The subject of this memoir was converted from heathenism through the preaching of American Missionaries, and died in the faith and hope of the Gospel. The reader will find in his history a proof of the excellent influence which Missionaries may be expected to exert wherever they shall be sent among the benighted millions of pagans. The authenticity of the narrative may be depended on by the reader.

MEMOIR

OF

JOHN ARCH,

A CHEROKEE YOUNG MAN.

JOHN ARCH* was born about the year 1797, in a part of the Cherokee country, called *Nun-ti-ya-lee*, which is surrounded by almost impassable mountains. There also, he spent the years of his childhood and youth. His mother died when he was very young, and his father taught him scarcely any thing except to hunt deer and other wild animals of

* John's Cherokee name was *Atsee*; on which account, it is presumed, the English name *Arch*, of similar sound, was given him by the white residents in the Cherokee nation. The origin of his other English name was probably as accidental.

the forest. This was his father's occupation.

The old man, when traveling through the woods in search of game, used to carry his son on his back, and on discovering a deer, would stop and make the little boy look over his shoulder till he could see the animal, and then would creep up and shoot it, with John still on his back. As the son grew older, and became expert in discovering deer at a distance, the father would sometimes rest his gun on a bush or log, and make him shoot them. Thus John killed several deer before he could raise a gun to his face, or walk alone through the woods.

As soon as he could run about, and take some care of himself, his father used to leave him all day at the hunting camp; and though he generally returned in the evening, he would sometimes be absent through the night. John amused himself by shooting turkies with a little gun his father had bought for him, always taking care not to go out of sight of the camp.

When he had become fully instructed in

the art of hunting, and old enough to travel all day through the woods with a gun on his back, his father bought him a good rifle, and bade him seek his own support. He was remarkably successful in hunting, always killing more game than his companions,* and received a great deal of praise whenever he returned to the village. The last year which he spent as a hunter, however, he had a poor gun, and then his companions succeeded better than himself, which so mortified him that he was ashamed to return home, and resolved to hunt no more. In speaking of this period of his life, five years afterwards, he said the world then appeared empty and vain, and life seemed a burden. A deep melancholy seized upon his spirits, and nothing could afford him relief.—This was in the year 1818, when he was about twenty-one years of age.

Going soon after with several of his countrymen, to Knoxville, in East Tennessee, he

* It is customary for several to hunt in company, though each retained without division whatever game he had himself acquired.

there met, incidentally, one of the assistant missionaries among the Cherokees. The missionary soon perceived that John was desirous of learning to read, and advised him to apply for admission to the school at Brainerd. He was so much interested in the prospects thus opened before him, that he could not wait to revisit his home, but traveled through the woods, nearly a hundred miles, to the late Mr. Hick's, well known to the patrons of the Cherokee mission as an excellent Christian chief, and there inquired the way to the missionary school.

His dress and appearance, when he came to Brainerd, showed at once that he belonged to the most uncultivated portion of his tribe ; and he had spent so many years in savage life, that the missionaries received his application with reluctance : but having heard his story, and noticed the marks of intelligence which his countenance exhibited, they consented to take him on trial. He informed them that, having lived on the borders of North Carolina, and near the white people, he had at-

tended school a short time when quite young, and had learned the letters of the alphabet. After his removal from school, he studied his spelling-book till it was worn out, and had ever since desired to learn to read ; but being too poor to support himself at school, and having worn out his book, he had relinquished the hope of learning, and nearly forgotten all that he had known.

He once traveled to Washington, where he received some tokens of kindness from Mr. Madison, then President of the United States : but it was the state of despondency, into which he had been thrown by his unprosperous pursuit of the chase during one whole hunting season, which was the principal cause of his looking for enjoyment beyond the confines of his native forests ; and it was his interview with the missionary at Knoxville, which had led him to determine on cultivating his mind at school. He said, he had never before been in the part of the nation where the school was situated, nor had he heard of the school, till informed of it in

the manner above stated; but he had come with the intention of remaining, if possible.

His views on religious subjects, before and after his coming to Brainerd, as he subsequently described them to one of the missionaries, were as follows :

He always believed, that there was a "Great Being above," but supposed he took little or no notice of his creatures here below. With regard to man, his prevailing impression was, that when he died he ceased to exist, and that there was no future state. He had heard it said, however, that men lived after death, and that the good went to a place of happiness, and the bad to a place of misery, and he sometimes thought this might be true. But he was persuaded, he said, if this was true, *he* must go to the place of misery, for he was bad, and had no idea that his character could be changed.

Not long after his coming to Brainerd, he was convinced that there was a future state of rewards and punishments, but he saw not how any, who had been once sinners, could

be pardoned and saved. On this account, he became very much distressed, and the more he saw of his own sinfulness the more distressed he was; until he began to wish he had never known any of these things.

He had, indeed, heard the missionaries say, that the greatest of sinners could be saved through the blood of Christ, but he did not believe it. In his apprehension it seemed plain that the sinner could not become holy, and thus gain admittance to heaven. When, however, the method of salvation, as revealed in the Gospel, and exemplified in the experience of good men, was more fully explained to him, he saw his error. But perceiving in himself a repugnance to this method, that repugnance seemed to him more criminal than all his other sins, and his distress became almost insupportable.

One whole night he lay awake, as he said, expecting sudden destruction, and such was his terror, that he trembled all the while (to use his own comparison) like one in an ague. But in the morning a new scene opened.

Then the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus appeared perfectly reasonable, and exactly suited to his case; and the thought of being saved in that way, and in no other, gave him unspeakable joy. "From that time," says one of the missionaries who knew him well, "John Arch lived a consistent Christian."

Near the close of the year 1819, ten months after John entered the school, his father come to take him home, and was not easily diverted from his purpose. He was unwilling that his son should be so far from him. This was a season of severe trial to John. He loved his father, and was desirous to please him; he loved his Savior, also, and was willing to leave all for his sake. Anxiety to be qualified for usefulness among his countrymen, was his ruling passion. Happily the old man, after spending several days with the missionaries, was so wrought upon by kindness and persuasion, that he consented to leave his son in the school.

About this time there was an occurrence

which strongly developed the character of this young man. One of his schoolmates wrongfully accused him of doing an improper act. Conscious of innocence, and yet not having the means of exculpation at command, he could not well brook the charge. That evening and night he was missing, and it was supposed he had absconded. But in the course of the forenoon, he made his appearance. On being informed that the rules of the school made it necessary for him to assign the reasons of his absence, he said:— "I felt angry, and knew that it was wicked; but I could not suppress it; I therefore went to the Savior, that he might reconcile my heart." He had spent the night in devotional exercises.

Being now able to read and write with tolerable correctness, and possessing naturally a good judgment, John was employed, with another young Cherokee, to assist one of the missionaries in preparing an elementary school-book in the Cherokee language, which

was afterwards printed. About the same time, he was examined by the mission church as to his religious attainments, and was admitted a candidate for Christian baptism. In December, before the rite was administered, a benevolent clergyman of East Tennessee came to Brainerd on a visit, and, hearing the story of John Arch, was so much interested that he expressed a desire to take John into his family, and to give him the benefit of his private instructions, and also of a respectable school in the place where he resided.

John referred the whole subject to the missionaries, whom he regarded, he said, as his fathers, and whose direction he should gladly follow. It being thought best for him to go, he accompanied the gentleman to Tennessee. The clergyman and his lady showed him every kindness, and secured his confidence and affection; and so far as they were concerned, he said it would have been pleasant to reside with them. But he was so shocked by the profaneness of some white men in the place, that, finding he could not remain with-

out hearing the name of God continually blasphemed, he returned abruptly to Brainerd.

Early in the year 1820, it was proposed that John, with one or two other promising Cherokees, should be removed to the Foreign Mission School at Cornwall, Conn.; but he not being willing to leave the land of his fathers, the plan, so far as it regarded him, was relinquished.

In February, he passed through a second examination before the church, particularly with respect to the nature and design of baptism; and the members being fully satisfied as to his knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, and as to the genuineness of his piety, he was baptized on the 20th. On that occasion, the missionaries made these remarks:— "When we consider the manner of his coming among us, but little more than a year ago, from the most distant and most ignorant part of his tribe, having no one to encourage him, and having barely heard that there were people here who would teach him; and when we think, also, of his diligence and study, the

progress he has made, and his apparent devotedness to God; we are led to hope, that, in due time, he will prove a blessing to his people."

It having been resolved to establish a school at Creekpath, about one hundred miles west of Brainerd, Mr. Butrick was appointed to that service, and was permitted to take John Arch with him as an assistant. On the 18th of March, they arrived at the place of their destination, and lodged in the dwelling of the father of Catharine Brown.

The Cherokees commenced the preparations they had engaged to make for a school with promptness, and conducted them with zeal, and a school was soon opened with the fairest prospects. The people of all ages seemed anxious to learn, and some were disposed to serious inquiry as to their spiritual interests. John was wholly devoted to his work, and pursued it with judgment, intelligence, and delightful animation.

The calls upon Mr. Butrick as a minister of the Gospel, became at length so numerous

and urgent, that he found it necessary to commit the business of elementary instruction in the school, very much to his Cherokee assistant. As John was thus deprived of time to cultivate his own mind by study, he was sent to Brainerd to ascertain if assistance could not be afforded them. This application led to the sending of Catharine Brown to Creekpath, as is described in her Memoir.

John returned to Brainerd in the autumn of 1820, and soon afterwards visited his father and other relatives. The sight of their moral degradation called up the tenderest feelings of his heart, and he warned them of the scenes and events of a future world. At first, he was listened to with a silent amazement, then with uneasiness, and at length some left the house. He then proposed prayer, and while he was praying others retired, till he was left almost alone. These things greatly discouraged him, and for a time he knew not what to do. But he finally resolved to be familiar and cheerful in his address, whenever he went among his people,

and to converse respecting their hunting and other customary avocations until he had secured their confidence, and then to introduce divine subjects as they were able to bear them. During this visit, he attended a meeting of the Presbytery and Missionary Society of North Carolina, on which occasion he had the privilege of sitting at the Lord's table with above five hundred Christian brethren. He excited considerable interest, and the people made him a valuable present, and also constituted him a member for life of their Missionary Society.

John returned to Brainerd early in November, and at the close of the month repaired again to Creekpath, at the earnest solicitation of Mr. Butrick, who needed his assistance.

About this time, he had the satisfaction of witnessing an important step taken by his people in the career of improvement. The national council divided their country into eight districts or counties, appointed four circuit judges, laid a general tax to build a court-house

in each district, and took such other measures as were deemed necessary to facilitate and secure the administration of justice. This incipient jurisprudence secured the respect of the people. The council also engaged to furnish such of the young men of the nation as should learn any trade, with a set of appropriate tools, as soon as they were qualified to commence business.

When Mr. Potter took charge of the station at Creekpath, in January, 1821, John Arch returned to Brainerd, with Mr. Butrick, and remained there until October, when he again went to Creekpath at the request of Mr. Potter. While at Brainerd, besides pursuing his studies attentively, and interpreting a discourse on the Sabbath, he usually, after sermon, read a chapter to the people, translating it into the Cherokee language as he went along, and making remarks upon it.—These remarks were very appropriate and edifying to the Cherokees. Old Mr. McDaniel, a respectable and intelligent white man, and grandfather to the present principal

chief, was well versed in the Cherokee language. He often said that John's knowledge of the Scriptures was truly astonishing, and that there was something great in that young man.

In January, 1822, he accompanied Mr. Butrick on a tour of two months to some of the most important places in the nation.—Tours of this kind formed his principal employment during the remainder of his life.—The distance traveled in this, was above five hundred miles. John was now brought into close connection with the missionaries as interpreter; an employment for which he was well qualified by his good sense, his sound judgment, his acquaintance with the Gospel, his familiarity with the English and Cherokee languages, and the deep interest he felt in the present and eternal welfare of his countrymen.

During the summer and autumn of this year, beside his other journeys, he accompanied Mr. Chamberlain on preaching tours of about a thousand miles. On one of these

tours they called at Willstown, near the eastern limits of the State of Alabama, where they made arrangements for a school. In the winter he accompanied Mr. C. again to that place, and assisted the people in erecting the necessary buildings.

He also engaged in active measures with a view to another station farther east, near the E-tow-ee, or Hightower river, and about seventy-five miles from Brainerd. He made one or two journeys to the place, in order to consult with the chiefs and other leading men. Wicked white men had taken much pains to prejudice and mislead the minds of this people, and to some extent had succeeded; but John finally made them understand and pursue their best interests.

During the winter, he accompanied Mr. Chamberlin in several tours for evangelical labor. In one of them, having gone as far as Willstown, he left Mr. C. and proceeded alone to Creekpath, whence he accompanied Catharine Brown and some others of kindred spirit to Brainerd. He said that, on this oc-

casion, he distinctly perceived a gradual increase of religious light among the people, as he approached a missionary station, and a gradual diminution as he receded, until at considerable distances, he often seemed to have come into total darkness. But, he added, the people every where have a disposition to hear the preaching of the Gospel, and he greatly desired to spend his days in proclaiming it to them. He was willing to devote his life to the employment of interpreter, if that was best; but he would do any thing in his power to become qualified to be himself a minister of the Gospel.

In the spring of 1823, a missionary station was commenced in the neighborhood of Samuel J. Mills, (a converted Cherokee of great zeal and activity,) and called Haweis. The agency of John Arch was employed, though to a less extent than in respect to the stations above mentioned, the previous agency of Mills having rendered it unnecessary.

There is no doubt but he was active and

useful during all the following summer, but nothing worthy of notice is recorded. In October, he made a circuit through the eastern part of the nation, on a visit to his relatives and the friends of his early years.—He was delighted to see the change, which had taken place among them, since his visit a year before. He no longer found them averse to instruction. The inmates of almost every cabin were disposed to serious inquiry.—He declared that the Cherokees in all that part of the nation were ready to receive the Gospel ; and so animated was he by the discovery, that he desired to go and spend a year among his countrymen in the wilderness of the Arkansas, to assist in making them ready also.

He returned to Brainerd by way of Newtown, or New Echota, the seat of the Cherokee government, and where the Cherokee printing establishment now is, and spent a Sabbath with the national council, which had ordered that no business should be done in the council, and no secular work in the

neighborhood of the council, on the Sabbath. He said he found every one cleanly dressed on that day, and that the observance was apparently strict and solemn.

He now remained some months at Brainerd, assisting in the steward's department, interpreting on the Sabbath, and aiding Mr. Hoyt in giving religious instruction to the Indians who called during the week.

Some time in the winter, going to Willstown on business, he wept when Mr. Chamberlin told him how much he was needed there. John said it was the same at every station, and felt anxious to help all. When he returned to Brainerd he could not rest till he had obtained leave of the brethren to spend some weeks at Willstown. He told Mr. C. he could not get the people of Willstown out of his mind, night or day. A meeting was appointed for the evening after his arrival. Many attended, and a very great solemnity was visible on the countenances of all present. John was heartily engaged in promoting the salvation of the people

during the whole time of his residence at the station, and a number of hopeful conversions occurred. This was the commencement of the church at Willstown.

And here it should be remarked, that John Arch was the instrument through which the word was conveyed to the understandings, and proved effectual to the conversion, of both of those eminent Cherokee servants of the Lord, John Huss and Samuel J. Mills.

In the spring of 1824, the subject of this memoir accompanied Mr. Evarts, the Corresponding Secretary of the Board, to several places in the Cherokee nation, and through a part of Alabama and Mississippi to Mayhew in the Choctaw nation. During this journey of four hundred miles, or more, in the course of which visits were made to a considerable number of families in the white settlements, to several missionary stations, and to many of his own people, he was every where treated with respect, and every where left a favorable impression of his character.

He was a pattern of mildness and amiableness, in his whole conduct.

John spent the summer at Creekpath interpreting for Mr. Potter on the Sabbath; and as Mr. Potter was then busily employed in erecting buildings, John was left to labor much of the time alone among the people, which he did by going from house to house. He met, however, with many discouragements, on account of a sectarian spirit which then prevailed in that place. He sometimes thought he was laboring entirely in vain. But he was enabled to make some abiding impressions; and the church at Creekpath is now, doubtless, enjoying the benefit of his prayers and labors at that time.

At the close of the year, he went to Willstown, to travel as interpreter with Mr. Chamberlin who resided at that station. This connection subsisted till his fatal illness left him no longer the ability to labor for the good of his beloved people.

The disease of which he died, which was the dropsy, began to assume a serious aspect

in February, 1825; when he found himself unable to render Mr. Chamberlin the usual assistance. He employed himself, however, in translating the third chapter of John into the Cherokee language. He wrote it in the syllabic alphabet invented by George Guess. The translation thus written, was received with wonderful avidity, and was soon copied, as was supposed, some hundreds of times, and read by multitudes. All who understood both languages, strongly approved of it.

In April his health was better, and he resumed his usual labors. He rode with Mr. Chamberlin to Candy's Creek, eighty-four miles distant, and returned to Brainerd, having considerable intercourse with the natives by the way: but the exertion was too great. At Brainerd he was afflicted with a hemorrhage, which constrained him to relinquish, in a great measure, the hope of life; and he expressed the wish, that he might spend the residue of his days at that place. He said he came first to Brainerd; there he received his education; there he was brought to the knowl-

edge of the Savior; and there he desired to die. He was not left in doubt, as to the disposition of the missionary friends at that station, to render him every attention in their power.

He had not been long there, before he received a kind invitation from Dr. Stout, of Athens, in Tennessee, about sixty miles distant, to spend some time under his care. He was accordingly taken to Athens, and received temporary relief from a surgical operation. But the physician was soon convinced, that his case was hopeless; and no sooner did John learn this fact, than he determined, if possible, to return ro Brainerd.

He commenced the journey on horseback, hoping to be able, in that way, to travel fourteen miles to the Cherokee Agency. The motion of the horse, however was too violent for his feeble frame; and, after going six miles, he was obliged to stop. It so happened that the family, in which his lot was now cast for a week, knew his character, and treated him with the utmost kindness. At

the end of the week, one of his brethren came for him from Brainerd, and conducted him, by easy stages, to that beloved spot.

In June, two days before his death, he was visited by Mr. Chamberlin, and was greatly animated by the interview. He told Mr. C. that he had often heard about ministers visiting the sick and dying, but he never knew before what a comfort it was to receive such a visit. He declared repeatedly to Mr. C. that he was entirely willing to trust himself, in life and death, to the disposal of his Almighty Savior. Indeed, his peace of mind was uninterrupted to the last.

He died calmly on the 18th of June, 1825. When told just before his decease, that the pains he felt were those of dissolution, and that in a few minutes more he would be in eternity, his countenance indicated great pleasure, and raising his hand, he said, "*Well, it is good.*" These were the last words he was heard to utter.

He was buried near the grave of Dr. Wor-

cester. His age was about twenty-eight years, and seven years had elapsed from his first coming to Brainerd.

HIS CHARACTER.

After mentioning the death of John Arch, his friend, Mr. Chamberlin, speaks of him in the following manner: "He, indeed, sleeps in the dust, but his memory will ever be dear to all his missionary brethren. He has been a warm friend to us, and to the cause in which we are engaged, and his loss will be severely felt. We feel ourselves admonished by this stroke. Perhaps we relied too much upon him; for we almost felt that the work could not go on without him."

Mr. Butrick gives the following testimony: "this dear brother, from his conversion till his death, was a general example of piety.—Though he was not perfect, yet I cannot now look back upon his life, and point out any particular stain in his Christian character.—He appeared sensible of his obligations to do what he could for the salvation of his people,

but having less confidence in his own judgment, than in that of those who had more experience than himself, he chose to be directed in his labors by the proper authority of the mission. And when thus directed, he did not complain, nor seem to suppose that his opinion would have been preferable. In this he was a reproof to many of his missionary brethren.

"He was not inaccessible to pride and vanity; yet these passions no sooner gained admittance into his heart, than they became the occasion of his humiliation before God. For this reason, I think, none of his brethren ever found it necessary to reprove him for self-sufficiency or stubbornness.

"He was peculiarly anxious to maintain the honor of the missionary character among his people, and to shield the Christian name from reproach. Wherever he went, by answering objections, exposing calumnies, and exhibiting the excellencies of the religion of Christ, he left a sweet savor to the honor of

his God, and the great benefit of his Christian brethren."

It should be remembered, that all the heathen are in as wretched a condition as John Arch was before his acquaintance with the missionaries, though most are not as sensible of it. They know nothing of the only name given under heaven among men, whereby they can be saved. Christ says, Go preach the gospel to them all, that these captives of sin may be delivered.

It should be remembered, too, that other heathen may be regenerated and sanctified by the gospel, as well as he who is the subject of this memoir. Yea, hundreds among the tribes of our western wilderness, and many thousands in foreign parts of the pagan world, are now members of the Christian church, and adorn their profession. The preaching of the gospel is as successful in heathen lands, as it is in lands called Christian.

Finally, it should be remembered, that only a few districts of the heathen world, in comparison with the whole number, have yet been visited by the missionary of the cross. The day has not dawned upon the great mass of the six hundred millions of Pagans and Mohammedans. Will not some of the pious youth who read these pages, consecrate themselves to the work of missions among the heathen, and educate themselves with a view to that service ? Many others should make untiring efforts to procure the necessary funds for supplying the heathen with the means of salvation. The missionary and missionary school, with school-books and the Scriptures were the means, in the hands of God, of making John Arch what he was ; and these should be multiplied till every one of the children of men has it in his power to enjoy them. Then will the day of millennial glory have fully risen upon the world, and the earth will be full of the knowledge and love of God.